For Sarfoji Rajah 180[illegible]

MONTONI;

OR,

THE CONFESSIONS OF

THE MONK OF SAINT BENEDICT.

A ROMANCE.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY EDWARD MORTIMER, ESQ.

Author of Friar Hildargo.

Avaunt, and quit my sight, let the earth hide thee;
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
That thou dost glare with.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. IV.

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1808.

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S SARASVATI MAHAL

THE TANJORE MA... SARASWATI MAHAL

MONTONI.

CHAP. I.

ON the following morning, ere the duca had arisen from his couch, word was brought him that the enemy were assembling on the distant hills. Immediately pursuant to his orders the trumpet's shrill blast blew to arms; the inhabitants of the castello, roused by it, rushed into the court-yard, and the troops soon armed themselves. The banners were hoisted on the walls, and the bridges drawn up.

Orlando, who had nearly recovered from his wound, joined the party assembled in the extensive area; as did also Torralto and Verezzio; there they awaited their instructions from the duca, who soon appeared completely armed.

"Welcome, my friends," said he; "I am glad to find our enemy has not forgotten us, although he lagged shamefully by the way. But it must be our kind care to save him the trouble of a return; here they must lie, that our dry plains may drink their welcome blood. Orlando, I am glad to see you with us; do you and Verezzio guard the castle gates; Toralto, you to the north ramparts; myself will where the action is the hottest. Now

to

to your posts, my friends; the enemy's approach is quick, and no doubt they think us unprepared for their assault; but we will send some hasty messenger that will roughly convince them to the contrary."

The troops now moved off to their several posts, and the duca, ascending a turret, took a careful view of his enemy, who were not half so numerous as he expected; he allowed them to advance sufficiently near the walls to answer his purpose, and then ordered his cannoneers to discharge their ordnance at them.

The execution was dreadful; whole ranks were cut down by these engines of horrid war: repeated discharges

made them quit their ground, while the trees as they retreated, thrown down by the violent force of their balls, added to their destruction by falling on the enemy.

The besiegers were thrown into such confusion, that unable to rally and advance near enough to do any execution with their arrows, they were obliged to retreat to save themselves.

Rodolpho beholding their flight, sneeringly said—"What! liked you not our welcome, my friends, 'twas surely warm enough; nay, 'tis unkind of you to turn your backs on our fair salute. Cannoneers, give double charges to your guns, that you may reach those birds that are upon the wing: 'twere pity

pity that the vultures should be foiled of such an ample feast; I fear that some will be left e'en now to reach their homes, and tell their wondering friends how well they ran from Rodolpho's fire-breathing walls."

The duca now sent a party from the castello, under the command of Toralto, to cut off the retreat of the enemy, who, advancing with too great certainty of success, was beat back with great loss, and himself slain by the hand of Alphonso, after a long and desperate encounter.

Rodolpho, greatly enraged at the death of Toralto, would instantly have marched out with all his troops to attack the enemy, but was persuaded not

to do so, by the representations of those who escaped of the still remaining force of the enemy, who were advantageously posted, and expected a considerable reinforcement every hour, and it was presumed would return to the attack the next morning.

The Duca de Rodolpho, after the action, ordered Spignoletti to conduct Victoria to his apartments, in order to carry his schemes into effect, which in the morning he was rendered unable to do by the approach of the enemy.

Victoria tremblingly obeyed the mandate, and followed the trusty emissary of her persecutor into his presence.

Rodolpho rose to receive her, and conducting her to a seat, said—

"You see, Victoria, from the events of this day, what little hope there is that either Manfred or Alphonso will ever leave with life the walls of my castello; let me entreat you to end this bloody strife, in which so many will fall. You know not what misery it is to me to be the cause of so much unhappiness to you. It is in your power to prevent the effusion of blood that e'er this time to-morrow will cover the verdant plains, by consenting to my request, and accompanying me to the altar, where——"

"Stop, duca!" hastily interrupted Victoria, "spare yourself the trouble of

of further converse on so hateful a subject, for never will I consent to so detestable a union."

"Nay, then," said Rodolpho, "if persuasive means have no effect, force must be used."

This said, he stamped with his foot, and Spignoletti, who had been waiting without the apartment, entered, and the duca said—

"Tell Father Oswald to await us in the chapel in half an hour."

Spignoletti departed to comply with his orders; and Rodolpho paced the apartment in manifest agitation at Victoria's refusal, for he had hoped that her gentle

gentle nature would have induced her to comply in order to save the destruction of so many, and he well knew that the state would now persist in their endeavours to reduce him and his forces to subjection; and he began too, for the first time, to reflect that his troops, weakened by continual attacks, must of course be eventually subdued. Could he secure the hand of Victoria, he would then avert the threatened vengeance, and be able to appease Conte Manfred.

This then was his resolve, and he impatiently chided the tardy minutes that must elapse ere Oswald could be informed of his wish to see him, and come from the monastery to the castello.

The sun had now sometime sunk behind the western hills, and the last gleam of day had ceased to gild their summits—a mistic silence reigned around—the troops, wearied with their toils, were buried in sleep—the tinted casement admitted an uncertain light into the extensive chamber, whose dark cedar wainscot and oaken floor, served to encrease the gloom.

Rodolpho was standing near one of the casements, deeply wrapped in his ruminations; he had not yet taken off his armour, and the plumes of his helmet nodded with the effect of his internal agitation; suddenly he quitted his position, and traversed with unequal steps the apartment; his countenance Victoria was unable to discern, because

because it was overshaded by his helmet.

The door of the apartment now opened, and the light of a torch suddenly gleamed into it. The duca started, but the figure of Spignoletti meeting his view he recovered himself.

"Is the father arrived?" said he, impatiently.

"Yes, your excellence," returned Spignoletti, "he is now in the chapel, but we had hard work to get here, for the enemy are very numerous."

Victoria's senses almost failed her, when she beheld the duca approaching, who rudely seizing her hand, almost

 dragged

dragged her through a long corridor that led to the chapel, which was dimly illumined by a lamp, and Victoria raising her eyes, saw Father Oswald standing at the altar ready to perform the service.

"Oh, father," said Victoria, "as you hope for eternal happiness, wed me not I conjure you contrary to my wish."

The venerable Oswald earnestly gazed on the trembling Victoria, while pity beamed from his mild eyes.

"Heaven forbid," said he, "fair daughter, if thy will accords not with this union, that I should commit so great a crime, and by so doing rebel against its high commands."

"Peace

"Peace, canting hypocrite!" exclaimed Rodolpho, "I command thee, friar, as you dread my furious wrath, this instant to perform the nuptial ceremony."

"Duca," said Father Oswald, firmly, "I fear not man, 'tis only Heaven's vengeance that I fear, nor will I venture to incur it by becoming an accessary in thy guilty deeds, and perpetrating so dreadful an impiety, as uniting this hapless daughter to thee, against her inclination."

Victoria, unable to speak her thanks, cast a grateful look on Oswald, who turning to depart the chapel, gave her his blessing.—

"Peace

"Peace be to thee, lady," said he, "the Holy Virgin comfort and protect thee in thy dangerous state."

Rodolpho now turning to one of his people, commanded him instantly to repair to the monastery, and to bring Father Gulliemo with him. From this friar, for some hidden reasons, he knew he could exact the performance of any act of atrocity, and therefore judged him the fittest person to employ in his present dark purposes.

Father Oswald, for his refusing to comply with his commands, would instantly have become the victim of his deadly revenge, but he was cautious of hurting him; his character was faultless, and he was adored by the vassals;

an

an attempt, therefore, on his life in the present state of his affairs, would be very injudicious, and perhaps occasion a revolt.

Victoria, silently awaiting her fate, had tremblingly sunk on the steps of the altar: her eyes once glanced on the duca, and as the torches flashed around their unequal lumens, she perceived, by his expressive countenance, the internal conflict in his breast.

Impatiently did he often look towards the portals of the chapel, while his pale lips gave utterance to dark and deadly curses on the pious Oswald, whom Victoria inwardly blessed for his exalted conduct.

At length, wearied with awaiting the return of the messenger, he ordered Spignoletti to see if he was coming.

"For," added he, "were it till the morn, I will not stir from the altar till I am united to thee, Victoria; therefore make a virtue of necessity, for mine I have sworn thou shalt be.

Spignoletti, after having been absent for sometime, now returned and informed the duca that Father Gulliemo was then entering the north postern.

Victoria again entreated of Heaven to aid her in that dreadful moment, and while thus employed the monk entered the chapel.

The

The duca now ordered him to perform the nuptial ceremony, and Victoria looked at him in order to see if there were hopes that he could be persuaded from the commission of the cruel act which the duca required of him; but alas! she turned from him with abhorrence, for there was such an expression of malice in his pale countenance, that she averted from it with terror.

The duca now raised the almost fainting Victoria from the steps of the altar; and Gulliemo opening his missal, began to read the service, while the savage features of the duca were animated with the satisfaction he felt at the near approach of the consummation of his wishes.

Scarcely,

Scarcely, however, had the monk begun, ere a dreadful peal of thunder shook the chapel, blue lightning darted through the casements, and in a hollow sepulchral tone, a dreadful soul-appalling voice uttered—"forbear!"

Rodolpho started, and the affrighted monk dropped the missal from his trembling hands—when the large portals of the chapel which fronted the altar were burst open, and a stream of light issuing from the interior, disclosed a warrior in complete armour, wearing his vizor down.

With noiseless pace the form approached the altar, when standing opposite to Rodolpho, a hollow voice, which

which seemed to issue from the grating of its vizor, said—

"Dost thou know me?"

"Know thee!" said the trembling Rodolpho—"horrid vision, what art thou?"

"Behold," said the hollow voice, "and know the dreadful deed is registered in the volume of the accusing angel!"

So saying, with its right hand the form slowly raised the vizor, and to Rodolpho's horror-struck eyes, disclosed a face pale and wan, with a deep gash on the forehead, from which the blood seemed to stream.

"Oh,

"Oh, Heaven, be merciful!—Yes, I know thee!—forgive me—save me!—oh, drag me not away—rend not my heart-strings thus!—begone, dreadful spectre—tis too much—too horrible—oh——"

Here with a groan Rodolpho fell senseless on the steps, and the supernatural visitant turning to Victoria, who also unable to bear up against her fears, was sinking on the earth, said in a softer tone of voice——

"Victoria, see the effect of guilt, fear not, thou art approved."

Whatever more the spectre might have uttered, was unheard by her, for her senses forsook her, nor did they return

turn till long after she had been conveyed to her chamber.

As soon as she was able, she threw herself on her knees in gratitude to the supreme being who had so continually guarded and protected her in the hour of danger, and feeling herself so conspicuously under the care of providence, she no longer was tormented by anx ious fears.

The morning now began to dawn, and in order to refresh her wearied frame, she reclined on her couch, and refreshing slumbers soon weighed heavy on her eye-lids.

When the domestics had somewhat recovered from their terror, they bore the

the duca to his apartments, assisted by Spignoletti, whose haggard countenance shewed the horrible sensations which disturbed his bosom.

When the duca recovered to a sense of recollection, he looked fearfully around, as if afraid the same dreadful object, which had caused his terrors, would again meet his eyes.

"Did you see it?" he slowly uttered in a low voice to Spignoletti.

"Oh, yes your excellence," he returned, "how like it was the marchese, I thought my old limbs would never have supported thy body, they trembled so much with my terrors."

"It

"It was indeed a horrible sight. Where is Victoria, is she safe?" demanded the duca.

"Yes, your excellence, she is in her apartment. St. Marco preserve thee from such a sight. Who was it gave him that wound?"

"Talk not of it," said the duca, "for the recollection shakes my nature. Does the morning approach?"

"It now dawns," returned Spignoletti, "and the forces of the Conte Manfred are in motion."

"Away then with womanish fears!" said Rodolpho, starting up; "this day shall

shall decide my fate and that of Victoria! Hasten, Spignoletti, let the trumpet sound to arms, lest we be found slumbering by our foes; in the din of war I shall forget the terrors of the night, and Rodolpho will once more be himself, nor shall all the spectral forms which ever the disturbed imagination formed to the mental vision again shake me from my purpose."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, when the hollow blasts of the trumpet made the duca start from his couch: a confused noise was heard. Again the trumpet called the troops to arms, who were now rushing in all directions towards the walls; some only partly armed, others without any defence: the cannons were repeatedly discharged, and

and all seemed confusion and uproar in the castello.

The attendants of the duca hastily buckled on his armour, and some of the officers rushing into his apartment, told him that the forces of the enemy had advanced close to the walls, where, secure from the balls, they were reparing for an assault.

Rodolpho was not long ere he left his apartment; the past occurrences of the night were forgot in the danger which now threatened him, and which to avert, he found, would require his utmost skill and dexterity.

...RAJA S...GGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL * THE

CHAP. II.

With the greatest impatience, Alphonso awaited the completion of the preparations made by the Conte Manfred, for attacking the Castello de Rodolpho.

The troops, which the incensed state had ordered to be collected, were soon in readiness, and which joined to the numerous vassals and retainers of the conte, formed a force which was supposed to be sufficiently numerous for the service they were about to be engaged in.

The

The army was divided into two divisions, one of which Alphonso commanded, and the Conte Manfred, who with a heavy heart pressed to his grief-worn bosom the contessa, whom he never expected again to behold in this world, led the other.

Stimulated by love, and impatient to rescue his adored Victoria from the power of Rodolpho, Alphonso pressed on, and arrived with his party at the castello, some hours before the division which Conte Manfred commanded. With the determination of scaling the walls, he marched boldly on, not thinking how well his enemy was prepared to receive him; and ere they had time to secure themselves from the fatal effect

effect of the cannon, a great number of his men were destroyed.

Terrified at so fierce a reception, the party retreated, and Alphonso, seeing his error, endeavoured to prevent the destruction of his party by marching them to a commanding eminence, where he intended to await the arrival of Conte Manfred and his party.

But in endeavouring to effect this he found himself attacked by a party of Rodolpho's troops, headed by Toralto, at the sight of whom he recollected the treacherous attempt on his life, and determined to revenge it.

He immediately returned the charge

of

of the enemy with invincible force, killing many of them with his own hands, till at length he found himself opposed by Toralto.

The combat was dreadful: Alphonso, with all the fire of youth, opposed himself to the well-directed blows of his adversary, who was more expert in the sanguine strife than himself; but vengeance nerved the arm of Alphonso, and victory declared at length in his favour, for his sword found an entrance in the throat of Toralto, who sunk from his horse: a torrent of blood issued from the wide-opening wound, and the shades of death dimed his sight for ever.

The party seeing the fate of their

leader retreated, but in their flight many of them sunk beneath their wounds, or were taken prisoners, few of them reaching in safety the gates of the castello.

At the close of the day, the party commanded by Conte Manfred arrived and joined Alphonso, when it was determined that the attack should be made at day-break.

When from the battlements of Heaven the sable banner of night was unfurled, the war trumpets sounded; the troops were soon in readiness to march, and favoured by the mist of the early dawn, they approached the walls so close ere they were perceived, that the balls from the cannons flew harm-

less

less over their heads, tearing up the earth behind them, or throwing down the leafy tenantry of the forest.

The troop in the castello appeared in the greatest disorder, at the unexpected attack, but soon, however, they collected on the walls, and poured down their missile weapons on the besiegers.

Regardless of the shower of arrows, Conte Manfred with Alphonso advanced at the head of their forces to the edge of the ditch, part of which they soon filled up with faggots and large limbs of trees, and approaching the drawbridge, hurled on it their flaming firebrands.

All was now a scene of confusion, the cries of the wounded were drowned in the shouts of the besiegers animating each other to the attack, and by the heartning peals of the warlike trumpets.

The troops belonging to the duca performed wonders; long did they protect the ponderous drawbridge and gates from the destructive flames, which at last envelloped them; while standing fearless on the half-burnt beams, appeared Rodolpho encouraging his men to protect them.

The flames soon raged with uncommon violence: to attempt to pass or to defend the gates being now alike impossible, the duca left them and repaired

paired to the walls, where he attacked the besiegers with his archers.

The conte seeing this, advanced with his party, and soon drove the troops from the walls with a horrible slaughter ,on both sides, which strewed the ditch and ramparts with dead bodies.

Rodolpho collecting his men now gave signal for a sally, and furiously rushed over the flaming bridge, which had fallen down from the chains that supported it, at the head of his troops.

The undaunted besiegers stood their ground, and pouring on them with irresistible force, at length drove

them back entering the gates with them.

The contest was now terrible, man to man, and spear to spear, gleamed dreadfully in sanguine strife. Alphonso was in every part encouraging his men; often did he see Rodolpho, and as often pressed forward to meet him, but the intervening crowds of combatants rendered it impossible.

The besiegers were now obliged to retreat to the second rampart, and having entered the great gates that led to it, closed them on their harsh grating hinges, strongly barring them within.

Mounted

Mounted on the heaps of the dying and the dead, Alphonso, with his people, attempted to scale the walls, but their height was so great that he failed in the attempt.

Mad with his disappointment, he now ordered his people to burn the gates, and soon the raging element surrounded them, and the great beams which supported part of the wall giving way it fell down with a hideous crash, overwhelming the besiegers, and precipitating numbers of the besieged on the rampart below. A silence now ensued for a moment, for both parties were involved in the volumes of smoke and dust which issued from the ruins.

Soon, however, it cleared away, and Alphonso appeared, with his men, climbing up the dismantled turrets, which they soon attained, in spite of the terrific opposition made by the adverse troops. The battle now raged with tenfold fury: driven to his last hold, Rodolpho maddening with fury, shame, and despair, saw his party decreasing, and torrents of their blood flow down the ruined walls; he now commanded some of his people to ascend the lofty turrets of the castello, who assailed the besiegers, by hurling huge fragments of the walls upon them, which smoaking down with irresistable fury entombed the gallant warriors below.

Still, however, fearless of the surrounding

rounding dangers, they continued the contest; for a long time the combat hung in doubtful balance; heaps of slain choaked up the battlements, while each side still fought with the greatest fury.

It was at this time that the south wing of the castello was discovered to be on fire; clouds of smoke soon obscured the combatants from the view of each other; but soon the flames encreasing, the smoke cleared away, and shortly after the embattled summit of the tower, and part of the side, fell down with a hideous crash on the ramparts below.

Again did a pause ensue, both armies beheld with terror the flaming pile,

pile, when fearful of delay, lest the castello should be burnt without his having the power to prevent it, Alphonso again mounted the ruins, when struck with a panic at his resistless efforts, the mercenaries of the duca began to retreat, and Rodolpho enraged to madness at his men being no longer able to continue the combat, rushed furiously through the hottest of the fight, and appeared before Alphonso.

For a moment they indignantly surveyed each other; when, as if by mutual consent, they began the attack: already had their swords gleamed in the cleft air, when Alphonso aiming a furious blow at the duca, exclaimed—

"Base

" Base and unmanly monster, at length my prayer is heard, and now will I avenge the wrongs of Victoria."

Enraged at this, Rodolpho, after having parried Alphonso's thrust, raised his sword with such determined intent of silencing for ever his hated adversary, that had not Alphonso luckily warded of the blow it must have proved fatal.

Thrice did they return to the charge, and thrice did they pause and breath; their armour was hacked in many places, and covered with the blood which spurted from the wounds; and now a furious stroke from Rodolpho fell on the helmet of Alphonso, and cleft

clept it in twain. A mist appeared before his eyes, he staggered with the violence of the blow, and he was on the point of falling, when seeing the duca again raising his arm to repeat the blow, he exerted himself to the utmost, and while his enemy was on the point of giving him the decisive wound, pierced his uplifted arm between the joints of his armour, when his sword fell from his unnerved hand, and Alphonso rushing on him flung him to the earth.

Their clanging armour echoed around; already was the arm of Alphonso uplifted to terminate the existence of the duca, when the sudden recollection that he was now in his power, and that he had been the protector

tector of his infancy, stopped his sword, and looking at the fallen duca, he said—

"I will not be thy executioner," said he; "to the incensed laws of thy country I shall leave thee."

Alphonso now directed some of his people to secure the Duca de Rodolpho, who was almost insensible from rage and loss of blood.

Both armies had discontinued the battle on beholding the engagement between the duca and Alphonso; and no sooner had Rodolpho's troops witnessed the fate of their leader than trembling for their own safety they threw

threw down their arms, and sued for mercy.

The trumpet now proclaimed a cessation of hostilities, and both parties, by order of the Conte Manfred, were soon busily employed in endeavouring to stop the fury of the flames, which still raged with unabating violence; at length, though not without the greatest exertions, its further progress was stopped, but the tower was entirely consumed.

When Alphonso left the duca, he rushed into the castello, calling aloud on Victoria; swiftly he passed along the numerous corridors and extensive apartments, but no where could he

discover

discover her. Frantic with rage and despair, he was returning from his search, when he met Spignoletti.

As the lioness rushes on the tyger, who roaming in search of food had entered the den, and was feeding on her young, so darted Alphonso on the hoary villain, and caught him by the throat —

"Tell me, this instant," said he, in a voice rendered almost inarticulate with rage, "where Victoria is, or this sword shall quickly send thee to perdition."

Trembling with fear, Spignoletti made signs to him to unloose his hold, for Alphonso had grasped him so firmly

firmly that he had nearly choaked him.

"The signora," said he, "is in the eastern turret, I will lead you to her directly."

Alphonso then followed him to the residence of Victoria, and having opened the portal, beheld the lovely maid lying senseless on the floor; he was hastily going to raise her up, when Spignoletti, starting forward, drew forth a concealed dagger, and aiming its deadly point at the bosom of Victoria, exclaimed—

"Thus perish all your hopes!"

But Alphonso perceiving his intent, quick

quick as the rushing blast, pierced his body with his sword, and he fell wallowing in a torrent of his own blood, by the side of the still inanimate Victoria.

From the casement of her apartment, Victoria had a distant view of part of the ramparts, where the engagement was the hottest, in dreadful expectation did she pass the day, alternately on her knees invoking Heaven to grant success to the troops of her father, and at the casement in viewing the fierce encounter, trembling with her terrors, she listened to the deafening roar of the cannon, and all the horrid din of furious warfare, and beheld the flaming towers, which she feared would

would entomb the besiegers in its ponderous ruins.

The falling of the tower afforded her a more extensive view of the ramparts; and she now beheld Alphonso, striding over the slain, and wielding his sword in hostile fury; presently after she saw the savage Rodolpho, advancing towards him: and at length, beheld her lover engaged in a furious contest with her unrelenting persecutor.

Her quick beating heart seemed ready to burst from its lovely mansion.

"Oh, heavens!" wildly she exclaimed,

claimed, "preserve him—preserve my Alphonso.—Shield him from harm, ye powers, who preside over the innocent."

She could utter no more, for now to her agonized sight appeared the duca aiming a furious blow at Alphonso, beneath which she saw him stagger. When suddenly her sight failed her, and she fell senseless on the floor.

How great was Victoria's delight, when on reviving from her inanimate state she found herself in the tender embrace of her parent, and beheld Alphonso, whom she thought was killed, standing before her.

"Oh!

"Oh, heavens!" she faintly exclaimed, "is it possible; can I be so blessed, as once more to behold you, my loved parent, and you, my generous deliverer? Happy moment!"

The excess of joy had nearly over come her, and she reclined in her father's arms, overpowered by the sudden transition from the deepest misery to the highest happiness.

"My beloved Victoria," said Conte Manfred, "heaven be praised that in its goodness has given you to me, after so long so distressing a separation; recover yourself, my beloved daughter, your gallant deliverer Alphonso, doubtless expects some token of your regard."

Victoria,

Victoria, blushing raised her lovely eyes, and looked on Alphonso, with an expression in her countenance which delighted him beyond conception, and stretching out her trembling hand to him, said—

"The Signor Alphonso will excuse me, if in the moments of unutterable happiness, which I owe to him, I should be unable to express what I feel."

"To be the cause of happiness to you, Signora," said Alphonso, "is a blessing which I can never sufficiently estimate; to see you once more in Conte Manfred's arms, is a pleasure, the recollection of which will cheer me amid all the vicissitudes

which fate seemed to have destined me to endure."

Alphonso then returned her lovely hand, on which he first impressed with trembling lips an ardent kiss.

The good Conte Manfred uttered not a word, but held out his hand to Alphonso, and having warmly pressed his within it, deeply sighed.

Victoria now broke the impressive silence, by asking after her mother.

Her question was ill calculated to remove the sudden painful emotion which it was but too apparent at that moment agitated the breast of the conte.

"I trust

"I trust she is not worse than when I left her," he replied; "her grief has been excessive on your account; but, when she receives the pleasing detail of this day's events, she will be restored to health and to happiness."

Alphonso now left the apartment for a short time, in order to call some men to remove the bleeding body of Spignoletti; and as they were taking it away, observing that he was not dead, mentioned the circumstance to Alphonso, who immediately, pleased with the intelligence, ordered that great care should be taken of him, for well knowing that he was entrusted with the duca's secrets, he was not without hope that through his

means he should be able to unfold the dark mysteries which surrounded himself.

Victoria now left her apartment, in which she had passed so many melancholy hours, accompanied by her father and Alphonso, who, when they had placed her in one which was farther removed from the ruined part of the castello, and had placed a strong guard in the passage which led to it, a precaution which was necessary at the present time, when the castello was in such a disturbed state, proceeded to make the arrangements which were necessary in order to ensure their safety. To this end, the troops belonging to the duca were collected, and having delivered up

their

their arms, they were confined till the pleasure of the senate should be known.

When this was done, the conte again returned to Victoria, leaving to Alphonso to make what other arrangements he might think requisite, as his years ill suited with the fatigues he had for so many days endured.

CHAP. III.

Having thus secured the small remnant of the troops, which Rodolpho had hired to defend his castello; he repaired to the apartment in which that haughty oppressor was confined.

He had recovered his senses, which he had for a long time been deprived of, owing to the loss of blood which had flowed from his wounds.

When Alphonso entered the chamber the duca started, but, without deigning to speak, he surveyed him with

with a look so expressive of dark and deadly hatred, and his whole frame appeared to be so much convulsed by contending passions, that he thought it would be best to retire, lest the life of his bitter enemy should be endangered by his violent emotions.

He then went to Spignoletti's apartment, and was pleased to find his wound had ceased to bleed, and that he was slowly returning to life.

Should he recover, Alphonso had every hope that the idea of a pardon would induce him to reveal the secrets of the duca, from which he had little doubt but he should be able to develope the mysteries which surrounded him.

He immediately sent off expresses to the state, to inform them of the happy termination of the sanguinary contest; and that the Duca de Rodolpho, and Dominic Spignoletti, would, as soon as their wounds permitted their removal from the castello, be sent with a proper guard to Genoa; that the Signor Toralto had already paid his forfeit-life in the first engagement; and of the other three leaders, Rhinaldo had fallen in a private contest with Orlando, who, being confined with his wounds, had been destroyed by the flames which consumed that part of the castello where he lay, and Verezzio was found amongst the dead which were heaped up near the smoaking ruins of the drawbridge.

Such

Such was the end of that sanguinary crew: justice at length, though tardy in her approach, overtook them, and they were all completely overthrown, at a time when they exulted in their fancied securities, and defied the efforts of their enemies.

Conte Manfred sent by the courier, who went to Genoa, a few lines to the contessa, which, he hinted, would have the happy effect of restoring peace to her afflicted bosom. Of the period of his return he was uncertain, as much yet remained to be done, and he would be constrained to await there the directions of the senate respecting the prisoners.

Some days now passed without any

material incident occurring: Spignoletti was recovering rapidly of his wound, as was also the duca, who since he had been taken, had not exchanged a word with any one, but still wore that stern and haughty look which he did before that great reverse of situation.

The bloom of health and beauty once more tinged the cheeks of Victoria, who was now happily restored to liberty, to her father, and Alphonso.

It was, however, some alloy to her comfort, to see that he who was the author of it was not happy, for Alphonso the more he saw the beloved idol of his soul, the more did his adoration of her

her encrease, and in consequence, his misery for the obscurity of his origin, and the utter impossibility of the offspring of a peasant possessing the hand of the daughter of Conte Manfred, filled his bosom with unutterable grief.

Often would Victoria behold him from her casement when it was midnight, and the moon shed her pale lamp on the tranquil face of nature, wandering sadly along the walls of the castello. She conjectured the cause, and often would her sighs swell her tender bosom. Had she been mistress of her own actions she would have pressed the dear mourner to her heart, and at the altar sworn to have been for ever his who so richly deserved her; but in

that point she could not but remember that she was a daughter, and that without the sanction of her parents, which, however great their gratitude might be to Alphonso, she could hardly foster a hope would induce them to overlook his origin, she could never be united to Alphonso.

As soon as the wounds of the Duca de Rodolpho and Spignoletti permitted, they were conveyed in separate carriages to Genoa, guarded by the troops of the state.

The Conte Manfred, with his lovely daughter and Alphonso, accompanied the party.

They set out early in the morning, and

and after having travelled the whole of the day, the shades of evening warned them to seek a shelter for the night; and Alphonso recollecting that he was near the well remembered monastery of St. Benedict, not far from which was a convent, proposed to the conte to request admittance there for the Signora Victoria, after which they might repair to the monastery.

Manfred having assented to this plan, Alphonso hastened to the convent, the abbess of which having kindly complied with his request, Victoria entered its holy walls, and they then bent their way to the monastery.

When Alphonso had entered the gates,

gates, he was instantly recognized by the two monks, Francisco and Pierre. The good old fathers were delighted to see him, and when they had acquainted the superior with the arrival of the conte and Alphonso, he immediately desired them to be conducted to his apartment.

He received them with much kindness, and endeavoured to amuse them by conversing on various topics, till the hour for repose arrived.

In return, Manfred related their proceedings at the castello de Rodolpho, which the superior listened to with great attention, and when he was informed that the duca was on his way to

to Genoa, where he was to answer for his conduct, he sighed.

"Alas!" said he, "I wish his present act of violence was the only one which he will have to answer for; happy indeed would it be for his soul, but he will I fear be accused of a long catalogue of crimes, horrible even to think of."

He then proceeded to inform the conte that not long ago a brother of the order, who had resided there some years, had on his death-bed given him some papers which he requested might not be perused until he was no more.

The monk's confession in his last moments implicated himself as having been

been concerned in so many dark transactions, that he was so greatly shocked at hearing of them, as to be incapable for some days of thinking of any thing else, that during the time he secluded himself in his apartment the monk died, and he then perused the papers he had left with him, which contained so dreadful a detail of several murders in which he had been engaged at the instigation of the Duca de Rodolpho, that he thought it necessary to make known the circumstance to the senate, that they might take the proper steps to punish the perpetrators of such an horrible act.

Alphonso now with some degree of anxious expectation, demanded of

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the superior if the name of the monk was not Bernardo.

"It was, my son," he replied: "your question surprises me. Did you know any thing of that unhappy man?—though now I reflect, that you could not, for by your looks you had not numbered many summers when he entered these walls."

Alphonso then related the events of that dreadful night, when he watched by the body of the monk, of the words of the supernatural form, in consequence of which he had travelled to the Castello de Montoni, of what he had seen in the southern chamber, and the hints thrown out by Benedetto.

The

The superior was astonished at his relation.

"Although," said he, "I do not put much faith in the idea that spirits are allowed to visit the earth, yet I believe that sometimes the airy forms of the departed appear to us when some great purpose is to be effected, such indeed as the developement of the horrible crime of murder.

"Your relation, my son, in some respects, so nearly coincide with the confession of the deceased Father Bernardo, that I see in this business the directing hand of an all-wise providence, who will in his own appointed time unfold the mysteries which seem to surround thee: continue, however, your

your search after Hubert, from him it appears likely that you will gain some information respecting them.

"If that the night was more distant, and that you were not weary with the fatigues of your journey and needed repose, I would make you acquainted with the confession of the departed father, but the tale is long and dreadful, and discloses deeds of such a nature as are sufficient to strike with horror even a mind long inured to deeds of blood and rapine."

Alphonso, whose expectations of hearing something that concerned himself, being greatly roused, drove away all desire of repose, and he entreated the superior to induge him with a

perusal of the confession of Bernardo; and the curiosity of the Conte Manfred being likewise excited, he joined in the request.

The kind superior could not withstand their entreaties, and rising from his seat, he opened a cabinet, out of which he took some papers, which he put into Alphonso's hand.

" You have now the melancholy detail," said he, " take it, my son, to your chamber; the relation would afflict me too much; you will therefore permit me to retire; in the morning I will converse with you on the subject."

The venerable superior now gave his

his pious benediction to the conte and Alphonso, and left the apartment, which Francisco soon after entered, to conduct them to the chambers prepared for them. Neither of them had any inclination for sleep, and when Francisco had shewn them where they were to repose, Alphonso trimmed his lamp, and sitting down to the table, unfolded the papers containing the confession; and the contents, which occupy the preceding pages, he read aloud to the astonished Manfred.

Both, indeed, were greatly affected at the narrative, and Alphonso often stopped to express his horror and astonishment, that in this world there should exist beings so lost to humanity,

manity, as to barter for gold, or to satiate their ambition, the lives of their fellow creatures, forgetful of the wrath of Heaven, and that murder seldom goes unpunished in this world —and in that which is to come, never.—

The Confession of the Monk Bernardo.

"How the dreadful idea of an hereafter tortures my guilty bosom—soul-rending thought!—My pen trembles in my guilty hand; a hand stained with murder's blackest crimes—sleep, that gives repose to the innocent, is my torment; for then my disturbed imagination forms to my mental visions the accusing spirits, whose mortal abodes I have consigned to the grave.—Oh, that I could sleep no more, that I were annihilated; but still I cling to existence, because it keeps me from greater torments—what a heart-breaking reflection—yet, how true.

"Can

"Can I hope for mercy hereafter,—I who never shewed it, but have plunged my dagger in the breasts of the innocent, and with an unpitying eye beheld their agonies—the dreadful minutes of Heaven's vengeance are waiting for my last gasps, then will they bear me away to endless torments, in comparison to which the anguish I now endure must be a Heaven.

"What a thought—my brain is disturbed, I can write no more.——

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"Again I resume my pen;—another day has passed;—my latter end is fast approaching, perhaps in a few more

more days I shall be no more—would that I were no more;—but alas, too certain am I that after my soul has quitted its frail tenement, the only impediment to endless tortures, then will begin eternal woe.

"Heaven, in thy gracious mercy grant me a longer respite, that I may sincerely repent of my crimes; but no, the period of my dissolution is hasty in its approach; methinks I hear the ill-boding raven, and see my tormentors:—already they call for me, Heaven be merciful.—Hark! what noise was that, some one is coming—'tis Francisco—he wishes to comfort me by his assurances of the mercy of Heaven: but can I hope for mercy? Oh, no; my sins are too great, the re-

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pentance of ages would not suffice to cleanse me of them.——

* * * * * * *

"The consoling discourse of Francisco has quieted me for a few moments; but he knows not the extent of the crimes which weigh down my soul.

"When shall I be able to commence my sad tale? They tell me I have but a short time to live; that I must repent.—Fools! when repentance is delayed till death approaches, of what avail is it?—None; too late to gloss over one fault, it becomes a crime in us to think that a few prayers, forced from us by our fears, will be of

any

any effect with Heaven for the sinful actions of our lives.

"To-day I am unable; perhaps to-morrow my agitations will be less, and I may be able to commence the horrible task of confessing my sins; but, oh! how many bitter, agonizing reflections will they excite.——

* * * * * * *

"I was born in the castello of the old Duca de Rodolpho, a man whom every one loved, of a most amiable disposition, to thee always kind, to thee—who—distraction! wretch that I was—I cannot proceed.—

"Rodolpho had a son: alas, he was

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the fatal source of all my crimes; would to heaven I had never seen his face; that the grave had opened its dreadful jaws and swallowed me up ere I had beheld him, or ere my heart conceived a friendship for him; with him I passed my hours, he treated me more as a companion, as his equal, than as his menial; these were my ruin, pride and ambition assailed me. I thought I beheld visionary honours crowding thick upon me; but alas, they were curses, dreadful curses empending o'er my devoted head.

"A fault I had committed in chastizing a domestic, brought on me the reproof of the duca; on me, the companion of his son. In secret I nursed some dark plans of revenge, little

little thinking that it was my generous benefactor whom I sought to injure.

"His son discovered from my agitated, pale countenance, the dread conflict in my bosom; gladly he took advantage of an opportunity for which he had long sought; and in that fatal moment when my passions were alive to my supposed insult, and my hand prompt to execute what they counselled, he offered me a large reward if I would become the murderer of his father.

"I accepted the terms, and in a hellish moment, with all the malice and hatred of an infuriated dæmon, I repaired

repaired to his apartment; it was then late in the evening, and when I entered his chamber he was not there; the door of his oratory was open; I looked in and saw him devoutly engaged in prayer; I stopped, my hand was unable to grasp my dagger, and I was retiring when he came out, and little suspecting my errand," said—

"Bernardo, I wished to speak to you, I have observed that you are hurt by the reproof I gave you the other day; perhaps I might have expressed myself too harshly; you must forget it, I do not like to see you unhappy.'

"I will

" I will forget it,' I replied; 'but first I must wash out the remembrance in your blood.'

" The duca started at my words; —he was unarmed, I rushed on him and stabbed him, till he who had protected my helpless infancy with all the kindness of a parent was no more.

" I then dragged the body down some secret steps, which led from the chamber to a vaulted passage, which was now known only to Rodolpho and myself: it led to a subterraneous communication with a cave in the forest.

" As I was supposed to be at that

 time

time at St. Remo, for I had concealed myself for the whole of the preceding day, and Rodolpho pretended that I was gone there by his orders, I avoided all suspicion of the murder, and my employer, who then succeeded to the estate and title, commended me for my conduct, rewarded me beyond the extent of my expectations, and from that time I became his constant companion and friend.

"We went to Genoa, where amongst the dissolute companions of the duca, was one Signor Toralto, with whom he became very intimate.

"Rodolpho was fond of gaming, and

and was unfortunate; he lost vast sums of money, and his estates become endangered. To avert the storm he determined to visit a distant relation of his, the Marchese de Montoni, and Toralto agreed to accompany him.

"A hospitable and kind reception awaited us there: the marchese and his amiable marchesa exerted their abilities to render our stay agreeable.

"Unfortunately the duca became enamoured of the marchesa, who was an elegant, lovely, and accomplished woman. Seeking a convenient opportunity he acquainted her with his

passion, and besought her to accept his love.

"The marchesa started at his base proposals with the utmost indignation, and threatened to acquaint the Marchese de Montoni with the insult he had offered.

"A sudden thought then rose in his mind: he communicated to the Signor Toralto, myself, and Spignoletti, the intention of the marchesa, and that Montoni would perhaps seriously revenge it, not only on him, but all of us; then slightly hinted that on his death, which was now become necessary to the general safety. The only impediment to his succeeding to his immense estate, would

would be the marchesa, whom he had but little doubt could easily be forced into an union with him; and her son, a young child then, who could be disposed of at a more convenient season without any difficulty. Rodolpho also made large promises at the same time to us, if we would consent to remove the marchese.

"Alas, we listened to him with pleasure, and, blinded by the fatal desire of riches, agreed to his horrible proposal.

"On that same evening, as the unfortunate marchese was taking his usual walk in the wood near the castello, we lay in wait for him, and as he was passing near an obscure spot,

 in

in which was a small door, concealed beneath some underwood, that communicated with the southern turret of the castello, we suddenly rushed on him, and dragging him into the passage, our bloody daggers soon confessed the dreadful deed.

"We were then anxious about the disposal of the body, for if we buried it in the forest it might be discovered; Rodolpho, however, advised us to secrete it in a private chamber in the southern turret, in which was a trap-door which communicated to a secret passage that led to one of the turrets; that part of the castello having been long avoided by the domestics from an idea of its being haunted.

"I then

"I then reported that I had seen him fall into the moat which surrounded the castello, and as in order to give an appearance of truth to my relation, it was necessary that there should be a body in the moat, as on that of the marchese, the frequent stabs would have avowed the deed.

"Bertrand, a poor simple domestic, was fixed on for the purpose; and on the same night, having procured the dress of the marchese, I enticed him to my apartments, and then made him put them on.

"When he had done this I told him to accompany me along the ramparts, and taking advantage of his being entirely unsuspicious of my intentions, pushed

pushed him over the wall and he fell into the moat: the unfortunate wretch soon sunk, and I retired elated with the success of my barbarous project.

"The next day, when the moat was ordered to be searched through the management of Spignoletti, that part were Bertrand had been thrown was left for many days without being examined, and the body was, as if by accident, at last discovered; and according to our wishes so completely disfigured by the time it had remained in the water, that the deception could not be perceived, and poor Bertrand was interred with all the honours suitable to the Marchese de Montoni.

"The

"The Duca de Rodolpho, as soon as he could, entreated the marchesa to listen to his addresses, but the contempt with which she treated him, raised his fury, and under the idea that she and the infant were the only obstacles to his attaining the estate, their deaths were resolved on.

"One evening, after she had been sometime confined in her apartment, Rodolpho entered and urged his suit, but she still resolutely refused to comply, and accusing him of the murder of the Marchese de Montoni, in the violence of his ungovernable passions he stabbed her.

"He then hastened to me and Spignoletti, and having made us acquainted with

with what he had done, we followed him to the chamber, where I beheld the hapless marchese weltering in her blood, and her dying gaze fixed on the infant, which she faintly pressed to her agitated bosom.

"Such a soul-rending spectacle, which would have created pity in the most abandoned, had no effect on me.

"I rushed on her like a fiend, and tore the lovely infant from her arms.

"Spignoletti, with his dagger, soon released the marchesa from her agonies, and I threw the child out of the casement into the moat which flowed beneath.

"That

"That side of the country was inundated by some violent rains, so that the poor infant could not have obtained assistance had he been discovered, which was impossible, as it was then quite dark.

"The body of the marchesa was removed to the same place where that of her unfortunate husband had been concealed, and a report was circulated, that unable to bear the affliction caused by the untimely death of the marchese, she followed him; and the young child was sent to a distant part, there to be brought up under the guardianship of the duca, till he was old enough to take possession of his estates.

"A short time after a courier arriv-

ed

ed with the pretended intelligence of his death, and thus the duca became possessed of the domains attached to Montoni or the next heir.

"What a retrospect is this for me, when on the bed of sickness, and daily awaiting my dissolution!—What a dreadful history of crimes is mine!—yet there still remains another tale to be told.—Oh, merciful Heaven, at least spare my life till I have committed the relation of the black deed to paper.

"The Duca de Rodolpho remained not long at the castello, before a circumstance occurred that made him hastily leave it.

"He

"He was, as he has often related to me, sitting alone in his apartment one evening at a late hour, when a noise, like that of the mourning of a person in pain, proceeding, apparently, from the extremity of it, made him suddenly turn round.

"The shades of night had already involved that part of the chamber in gloomy obscurity, and as he was attentively listening to the mourns, on a sudden, to his terrified gaze, appeared the spectral forms of the murdered Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni.

"A horrid gash in the forehead of the marchese appeared to bleed, and drops of blood trickled down the garments

garments of the marchesa from a wound in her side.

"The shade of Montoni, advancing towards the terrified duca, in a hollow voice said——

"Yet a little while, and thou murderer accursed, shall be consigned to endless tortures; and thou unconscious of it, shalt nourish the cause of thy destruction in thy bosom.'

"Rodolpho heard no more: he rushed out of the apartment and entered mine: ignorant of the cause, I was astonished to behold him, and thought that his senses had forsaken him, for his eyes seemed intently gazing on some horrible object: his hair stood an end,

and

and his looks were haggard and affrighted.

"'Bernardo,' said he, in broken accents: 'I have seen them—I have heard their dreadful enunciation of vengeance!—Hide me from them, or they will drag away my soul to eternal tortures!'

"Alarmed at these words, I dismissed the wondering attendants, and when I had succeeded in composing the agitation he endured, he gave me the foregoing account.

"I affected to laugh at his terrors, called them idle delusions resulting from his own disturbed imagination; and expressed my disbelief of the spi-

rit

rit being permitted to linger on the earth after its being separated from the body; but all I could say was insufficient to avert the deep melancholy which oppressed him. He was terrified at being alone even for a moment, so terrible is a guilty conscience!—Alas! how have I felt its horrors!—how do I feel them now!

"Twenty years have passed since that time, yet the remembrance is still fresh in my memory—alas! nothing can erase the bloody scenes in which I have borne so horrible a part, from my tortured, my distracted recollection. But let me not reflect on the past, lest I should be unable to proceed.

"Finding that the efforts of Sig-

nor

nor Toralto and myself were ineffectual to calm the constant perturbation of his mind, we proposed to him to leave the castello, where every thing conspired to keep in his recollection the dark deeds he had perpetrated.

"The Duca de Rodolpho approved of the plan, and as he did not intend ever to reside in the Castello de Montoni again, the domestics were sent away, and the gates fastened.

"When we arrived at Genoa, the duca again plunged into every excess with a wish to exclude the busy workings of his conscience, which did not fail to torment him, even when in his most festal hours.

"At length the lovely daughter of a Genoese nobleman attracted his attention.

"The Signora Marinelli was rich, beautiful, and accomplished, and although averse to the union, yet in obedience to the will of her father, she became his wife.

"The duca seemed to be somewhat composed, and for a short time to enjoy the tranquillity after his nuptials; but this calm was not of long duration.

"On a sudden his deportment was entirely changed towards every one; he become gloomy and distant, and I could easily perceive that his love for

for his wife was changed to the most deadly hatred.

"Without any reason assigned, the duca set out with his lady to the wild and desert province of Calabria, whither I accompanied him, and finding that his gloomy behaviour daily encreased, I one day ventured to inquire the reason.

"Never shall I forget the look the duca gave me; there appeared such malign and terrible designs expressed in it, that even I averted from it with horror.

"Rodolpho caught my hand.

"To you, my friend,' said he, 'I will

will unfold the cause of my grief—'tis the duchesa.'

"I shuddered;—accustomed as I was to blood and murder, the destruction of that lovely female, for by his looks I guessed too well his dark intents, shocked my soul.

"Rodolpho perceived my agitation; he saw the moment was unfavourable.

"Bernardo,' said he, 'why do you tremble, believe me I did not mean to endanger the life of the duchesa,—will you then assist my views?'

"In any thing short of her destruction,'

tion,' I replied, 'you may command me.'

"Hear then with attention my determination,' replied the duca: 'the sight of the duchesa is hateful to me, for she is the bar to my attainment of a beauteous female I saw at Savona; she is the daughter of the old Conte Romaldo; and, therefore, any professions short of marriage would be treated by her with contempt. I feel it necessary for my repose to be enabled to call this fascinating beauty mine;—you understand me, Bernardo?'

"I do,' I replied, 'let me know your intentions respecting the duchesa?'

" There are some private apartments,' he continued, 'in this mansion, beneath the east wing, known as I have every reason to suppose only to myself; indeed as that part of the building is detached from the rest, and an idle rumour has gained belief among the domestics of its being haunted, there is little danger of its being visited; it is one of these chambers which I intend shall be the residence of the duchesa, and it is to you, my friend,' added he, smiling, 'that I would confide her; Spignoletti will assist you, tell me, then, will you be once more my friend?'

" The duca succeeded but too well, and I consented to the cruel act, which

which he proposed I should immediately carry into effect.

"The next night was fixed on to perpetrate this diabolical design, when Spignoletti and myself entering her apartment in the dead of night; awoke her from her tranquil slumbers, and having terrified her with threats of instant destruction in case she made any noise, forced her to arise, and when she had thrown over her some loose garments, conveyed her to the secret apartment which the cruel Rodolpho had fixed on for her residence.

"The unfortunate duchesa was then reported to be sick, and a

 monk

monk bribed for that purpose, having declared her disorder to be a malignant fever; her attendants therefore were not allowed to enter her apartments, lest they should catch it, and for some time no one had admittance excepting the monk, who was supposed to be attending her.

"At length the domestics were given to understand that she was no more, and as it was necessary owing to the complaint of which she was reported to have died to inter her as soon as possible, the solemn rites of the church were hastily performed over an empty coffin.

"After some time was passed by the

the duca, in all the mockery of woe, he proceeded to Genoa, accompanied by the Signor Toralto.

"Spignoletti and myself were left in Calabria, in order to attend to the unfortunate duchesa, who pined away her solitary hours in her gloomy dungeon; when, after a stay of a few weeks, I received a pacquet from the duca, in which he requested me to convey my prisoner, as soon as possible, to the Castello de Rodolpho.

"In compliance with his wishes we set out on the long fatiguing journey, and when we arrived at our destination, the duchesa was brought privately into the castello,

by means of a subterraneous communication.

"After some time was past in courtship, the duca obtained the consent of the Signora Romaldo, and preparations were making for the union, when one day the duca taking me aside said, in his usual impressive manner—

"'Bernardo, are you my friend?'

"I started at his words.—'You can have no reason, duca,' I replied, 'to think me otherwise.'

"'Indeed I have not, Bernardo,' said the duca; 'but I fear that I have

have not been sufficiently grateful to you.'

"I have no complaint to make of your generosity,' I returned, 'for it has far exceeded my most sanguine expectations, as well as deserts.'

"I am not of your opinion,' returned the duca, 'acts like your's can never be sufficiently rewarded. You know I have a small estate at Telano, accept of it, my friend; from this hour it is your's.'

"I thanked him for the gift.

"Bernardo,' said he, with a sigh, 'I am still unhappy.'

"'You astonish me,' I replied, 'on the eve of being united to a lovely woman—'

"'I know what you would say,' said he, interrupting me; 'but still one thing more remains to be done, which, if you will consent to, call me your's for ever.'

"I begged to know what it was, when the countenance of the duca grew pale, and he appeared much agitated.

"'Bernardo,' said he, in a low voice; 'you know the western chamber, there is an accursing voice there, which I tremble lest at any time it should be heard. If that were silenced

silenced I should then be secure and happy.'

"Then be so, duca,' I replied, 'I will away and ease your fear on that head for ever.'

"I now left him, and after I had found Spignoletti, and had made him acquainted with what I was going to perform, the shades of night enveloped the earth;—armed with our daggers we softly stole to the western chamber, the door of which we gently opened, in the hope that our intended victim would be asleep.

"She had not, however, retired to rest, and guessing our intention she screamed out, and implored for

 mercy;

mercy; but, alas! her cries, her entreaties were of no avail, and the unfortunate duchesa soon breathed her last.

"I dragged her body beneath the tapestry, where I left it, and having fastened the door, hastened to the duca to acquaint him with the performance of the horrible act.

"He seemed much agitated when I entered the chamber; his countenance was pale, and anxious expectation strongly depictured in his countenance.

"Is it done?' said he, 'am I safe?'

' I satisfied

"I satisfied him in that respect, and he again expressed his gratitude, and made me fresh presents.

"The nuptials of the duca and the Signora Romaldo were now on the eve of taking place, and the time appointed at length arriving, he set out full of delight, attended by a numerous train, for the residence of the Conte Romaldo, where the ceremony was to be performed.

"But when we arrived in sight of the castello where he resided, we were much astonished to see the casements and doors closed, and the place in appearance without inhabitants.

"Our

"Our repeated summons at the gates were at length answered by an attendant, whose melancholy looks almost told his errand, which was that the lovely signora had early that morning breathed her last.

"Here was a disappointment to the duca, the just reward of unheard of villainies, of crimes, the bare relation of which are dreadful.

"Rodolpho returned to Genoa, and amongst his gay companions, strove to lull the agonizing pangs of conscience;—alas! how vain was the attempt.

"Those friendships which have their foundation in guilt are seldom

of

of long duration: the duca and I had some words, in consequence of which I left him, and from that period we have never met.

"I was soon after seized with a violent illness, which made me reflect for the first time on the atrocious deeds of my life; and perhaps for the first time too, I thought of an hereafter—to me what a soul agonizing thought!——

"I then made a solemn vow if I recovered to enter a monastery, and to devote the remainder of my days to repent of my past offences, which I shall ere long answer for at the dreadful tribunal of Heaven.

"The

" The painting which hangs in my cell, is that of the unfortunate Duchesa de Montoni, and her innocent offspring; alas, when I look on the representations of those injured, murdered beings, what horrible pangs do I feel! I still think I see her bleeding, her dying eyes.—

" But let me not at this awful period of my life, by indulging too dreadful recollections, endanger my senses: I am now on the verge of immortality, the lamp of life is expiring: Alas! with what horror does the idea of dissolution inspire me with.

" These papers, the dreadful records

cords of my deeds of darkness, I shall leave with the superior of the monastery, for never will my soul rest till the horrible murders of so many victims of the duca's revengeful and ambitious passions are made known to the world, and justice inflicted on the perpetrators.

"Alas! did I say my soul would never rest till then—such an idea would smooth the rugged path to the grave—will it rest after?—I fear not—Heaven in thy all gracious mercy have pity on a dying penitent."

When

When Alphonso had read the horrible relation, he silently laid the papers on the table, and for a long period seemed lost in thought, he was indeed greatly disappointed to find that no part of it appeared in any manner to relate to him. Yet still he thought he had reason to conclude, that he was in some measure implicated in the tale, from the circumstance of the supernatural visitation.

He found he was condemned to remain in uncertainty, but he determined to lose no time in seeking Hubert, who, he trusted, would be able to elucidate some of the mysteries which hung over him.

Conte Manfred now retired to rest, and Alphonso, after some time passed in his ruminations, also endeavoured to seek repose, but in vain, for his mind dwelling on the confession of the monk, would not for a moment yield to the influence of sleep, and when the bell summoned the monks to the chapel to perform the mattin service, he arose, and joined in their devotions, after which he sought the superior of the monastery, to return him the papers, which he had so kindly submitted to his perusal.

" You have not I believe, my son,' said the venerable father, ' found any thing in the manuscript, which in any way tends to the elucidation of the

the purport of the supernatural appearance which you witnessed; but you have no doubt observed how well it agrees with what you informed me respecting the remains of the unfortunate Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni; I would, therefore, have you follow implicitly its directions, for such a wonderful visitation, which almost exceeds the bounds of human credence, must be to answer some great purpose.

Conte Manfred now entered, and being impatient to reach Genoa, put an end to the conversation; and when Alphonso had with him partaken of the morning repast, they expressed their acknowledgments to the kind abbot,

abbot, and taking leave of him, and the Fathers Francisco and Pierre, mounted their horses and rode to the convent, where they had left the lovely Victoria, who was awaiting their arrival, and soon after proceeded on their journey.

CHAP. IV.

CONTE MANFRED at length arrived at Genoa, with his daughter and Alphonso.

On the road he had been greeted with the pleasing intelligence, that the contessa was recovering from her ill state of health.

Victoria was not long ere she was in her maternal arms: the meeting was affecting, for both reflecting on the agonies they had endured while they were parted, felt their delight so great, that

that their joys, which prevented their speech, at length found vent at their eyes, and they were for a long time bedewed with tears.

To Alphonso was owing their present happiness, and to him they thought they never could be sufficiently grateful; but alas, the only return that they could make him, which would be productive of the most ecstatic delight—the hand of the lovely Victoria—was, perhaps, the last idea that would ever enter their minds.

The Duca de Rodolpho and Spignoletti, as soon as they arrived, were immediately lodged in the state prison; and a day appointed for the duca's being examined, as well with respect

respect to the detention of the Signora Victoria, as also concerning the murders deve'oped by the confession of the monk Bernardo.

The senate ordered the mercenaries, which had been confined in the castello, to be released, on their promising never to take any part against the state, which they gladly complying with were permitted to return to their families.

Alphonso made the most minute inquiries throughout Genoa, after Hubert his father, but without success, and he began to despair of ever finding him; he even thought of returning to the Castello de Montoni, in the slender hope that on the domains he might obtain

obtain more correct information, but in this he was dissuaded by Manfred, who immediately sent there a trusty messenger to make the inquiries Alphonso wished.

One evening as he was taking a solitary walk in the forest, near the pallazio of the conte, a sudden storm made him seek shelter in a small cottage, which he beheld at a distance.

He approached it, and raising the latch opened the door, when his delight and astonishment are not to be expressed at beholding before him the object of his wishes, the ancient Hubert, whom he had so long sought for.

He embraced with the highest sen-

 sations

sations of filial love his astonished parents, and when the first emotions of his affections were over, he briefly related to them the adventures he had met with, the directions of the spectral form of Bernardo, and concluded with stating the situation of his bitter enemy, the Duca de Rodolpho, and his vile associate.

Hubert appeared delighted with his intelligence, and he raised his hands to Heaven, and seemed to be devoutly expressing his thanks for it—at length he uttered—

"The moment is at length arrived which I have so anxiously waited for; your bitter enemy, as you may well call him, has it not now in his power

to

to hurt you, and I may unfold the important secret, known in this world only to Jeannetta, myself, and two others."

"What secret?" said the impatient Alphonso, interrupting him—"tell me instantly!"

"It is that you, Signor, are no son of mine, the——"

"Not your son!" again exclaimed Alphonso—"Who then are my parents?—Oh, if you have ought of pity, friendship, or affection left for me, reveal them to me!"

"Alas, Signor!" said Hubert, "death has long since claimed them!"

"Oh! Heaven rest the dear marchesa!" said Jeannetta, her aged eyes suffused in tears, "her's was indeed a dreadful fate."

"Marchesa!" said the agitated Alphonso—"what is it you mean? Oh, by that pity, that humanity, which, perhaps, was your only inducement to watch over my infantine years, unfold to me the tale, while my still remaining faculties give me power to hear, or I have breath to ask it."

"Have patience, Signor," replied Hubert, "the tale is long: pray be composed, you shall know every circumstance, though I fear that what I have to relate will agonize your gentle

gentle heart, for it is a tale of horror indeed."

Alphonso now summoning up all his patience, threw himself on a seat, and listened to Hubert, who thus proceeded—

"It is now, Signor, near twenty-five years since I first entered into the service of the Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni, whose large domains lay many leagues east of Genoa.

"The first five years of my life I passed in a state of happiness and content, since unknown to me.

"The Marchese de Montoni was certainly the kindest master that man

ever had; all his vassals loved both him and the marchesa with the most sincere affection; we would have died to have served him; how could it be otherwise, Signor, when they were so kind to us?

"You may well remember, Jeannetta," continued Hubert, addressing himself to his wife, "when we lost all our property by the floods which destroyed my cottage, how kind he behaved, and gave me besides a situation in the castello, while the marchesa took you into her service."

"Oh, yes," cried the sobbing Jeannetta, "how should I ever forget it? Dear good marchesa—well, she's now a saint in Heaven for all her kind acts."

"Well,

"Well, Signor," continued Hubert, "we lived, as I said before, near five years in this happy state, when all our comforts were destroyed by the arrival of the Duca de Rodolpho and his associates at the castello.

"My lord, the marchese, received the duca with the greatest kindness, as did also the marchesa, though he had little reason to expect it, for there were at that time some suspicions about the death of his father, who died suddenly or disappeared, I do not know which; and then his son lost all his vast fortunes by keeping bad company, and gaming, at Genoa; however, as he was a relation of the marchese, he overlooked his conduct, and welcomed him to the castello as if nothing

had happened; but after he had been there a short time, the poor marchesa lost all her spirits, she scarcely even left her apartments, and at times my wife would tell me she found her in tears."

"Well," cried the impatient Alphonso, "what relation can this long tale have to me?"

"You shall know all, Signor, if you will wait a little longer.

"I should have said before that the marchese and marchesa had only one child, called Ferdinando, who was at this time about eighteen months old, of which child my wife had the care,

care, so that she was often in the apartments of the marchesa.

"One evening as she was, according to her usual custom, taking the child to her lady before he was put to bed, she heard a loud talking in the marchesa's antichamber.

"Being semewhat surprised, and curious to know what was the subject of conversation, she stopped to listen, and heard the Duca de Rodolpho avowing his love for the marchesa, which she resented, and declared that she would instantly inform the marchese of his base design.

"Jeannetta, fearful she should be found listening to their conversation,

having heard this withdrew from the door, and informed me of the circumstance, which well accounted for the disquiet which had so long disturbed the peace of the marchese; however, poor lady, if she did intend to inform the marchese of the duca's base proposals to her, it was rendered impossible, for that very evening he was missed from the castello, to which alas, he never returned alive.

"Frantic at his absence, the marchesa employed every possible means to discover what had befallen him, but to no purpose; one of the domestics being missing at the same time, some suspicions seemed to rest on him as being the cause of the absence of the marchese, but he was too old and inoffen-

sive

sive to entertain any thought of harm.

"The Duca de Rodolpho seemed particularly anxious to learn the fate of the marchese, I say seemed, because even at that time Jeannetta and I had our suspicions that all was not right: however, at last, when the moat was searched some days after, the body of the unfortunate marchese was found, and interred with great solemnity in the chapel belonging to the castello. Alas! I think I still see the poor marchesa, when she followed his body to the grave, and stood wringing her hands in speechless agony over it, as the earth was covering it for ever from her sight.

"After that she shut herself up in her apartments, with no one with her but Ferdinando; and her moans, which I could sometimes hear in the corridor which led to them, used almost to break my heart.

"The duca sought all opportunities to see her, and one evening, my wife, who had seen him enter the apartment, listening at the door, heard her accuse him of the murder of the marchese.

"The next day we were ordered out, with most of the other servants, by the duca's domestic, Spignoletti, who now appeared to have usurped the directions of every thing.

"A small

"A small hut near the castello happening, fortunately, at that time to be empty, we took it, and I had resided there a short time, when the country around being inundated by some violent rains, I was banking up my little garden very early one morning, when I perceived something floating on the water at a distance; as I saw that the wind would waft it by me, I waited till it came near, when I discovered that it was some hay which the waters had forced along with them.

"When the hay came opposite to the part where I was, all of a sudden I thought I heard a child cry; I listened again, and at length being convinced that there must be an infant in the hay,

hay, I plunged into the water and swam towards it, when, what was my astonishment at beholding the young Ferdinando, the son of the unfortunate Marchesa de Montoni! I immediately took him to my cottage, and gave the dear infant to my wife, who was delighted at the goodness of providence, who had put it in my power to preserve him.

"I then repaired to the castello to inform the marchesa, whom I knew would be frantic with grief at her loss, of the wonderful circumstance of his preservation, when to my utter distress, I learnt that she had expired but a few hours before.

"Some horrible suspicions now entered

tered my mind, and I returned home without having disclosed the circumstance of the child being found; great indeed was my surprise to hear the next day, that the infant Ferdinando had been sent to a distant part of the country.

"I now clearly saw through the dreadful transaction, and determined instantly on quitting the Montoni estate, in order to secret the infant from the diabolical intentions of the Duca de Rodolpho; and accordingly, a short time after, I repaired to Esemona, where I soon heard, as I expected, that the duca had come into possession of the estate, as being next heir in consequence of the death of the young Ferdinando.

"Now,

"Now, Signor, restrain I intreat you the violence of your feelings, when I acquaint you that you are that very Ferdinando."

"Gracious powers!" exclaimed Alphonso, starting from his seat—"can this be true, or is it only an horrible delusion sent to torture my distempered imagination?—Speak, Hubert, am I awake—are these things real?"

"By the blessed saints," returned Hubert, piously crossing himself, "what I tell you is as true as that there is a God above."

"Oh, my parents!" exclaimed Alphonso, after a pause, in which the various passions that agitated his breast

breast were strongly depicted in his intelligent countenance, was it then your inanimate forms which I saw?—and were they the last words of my sainted mother which I traced at Montoni:—can it be possible!—Yet, why should I doubt it, was it not evident that the spirit of the departed monk was permitted to appear to lead me to the discovery of the horrible murder of my parents, of the accursed hellish deeds of the infernal fiend Rodolpho:—Yes, justice, thou murderous villain, has long slept, but now I trust will awake, and rise in damning vengeance against thee. Sacred shades of my dear parents, look down and hear me, while I solemnly swear to pursue the wretch whose hands are embrued with your precious

cious blood, till his black soul ceases to inhabit his accursed form."

Here Alphonso, quite overcome with his feelings, covered his face with his mantle, and continued motionless for a long time, during which neither Hubert or Jeannetta, who were themselves greatly affected with the revived remembrances of the lamented Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni, as well as by his agitations; offered to endeavour to console him.

At length, however, they ventured to speak, when Alphonso, dropping his mantle, disclosed his pale features, and his eyes swollen by the tears caused by the speechless agony he endured.

He

He now in a faint voice requested Hubert to continue his narrative, which he immediately complied with in the following words :—

" I lived near Cremona, Signor, after I had left the domains of Montoni, for near eight years, during which time Jeannetta was your constant attendant, and we both loved you as if you had been our own; I incessantly lamented my inability, from my humble station in life, to assert your right, both because the world might conclude that I was endeavouring to impose on them, and for fear, lest the duca, hearing of your being still in existence, should terminate a life so dangerous to him; however, I lived in hopes that it

might

might happen that he would die, or that when you were arrived to years of maturity you might be able to assert your own rights, when the following circumstance altered my resolutions.

"One evening as I was returning home, I heard a great noise at the entrance of a wood through which my road lay, when as I advanced I discovered a cavalier with six servants, attacked by a desperate gang of as near as I could guess, nine ruffians: hastily seizing a sword that lay on the ground, I fought for some time in his defence, and seeing that he was wounded, and closely pressed by the leader of the gang, who was going to repeat the thrust, I rushed

ed on him, and was lucky enough to stop his intents by sheathing my sword in his body: the combat did not last very long after this circumstance, for the remainder of the ruffians fled, leaving on the ground five of their number.

"Assisted by the two domestics, who were all that were alive out of six, we conveyed the wounded cavalier to my habitation; where, on seeing his features, it would be difficult to express my astonishment, when I found that it was the life of the Duca de Rodolpho which I had preserved; I was at first extremely fearful, lest he should recognize the features of the Marchese de Montoni in your youthful countenance;

but

but a moment's reflection convinced me of the great improbability, as he had but seldom seen you at the castello, and you were then an infant: as for myself, grief and encreasing years had greatly altered me; on that score I therefore felt no apprehensions.

"The duca continued at my cottage for many days, having received a dangerous wound in his side, and during that time Jeannetta and myself attended him with the greatest attention; for, indeed, I began to wish that he might live, in order to afford him an opportunity of repenting of his sins.

"When he recovered, and was pre-

preparing to leave my cottage, he rewarded me in a most generous manner, and as a further acknowledgment of his gratitude for my services, offered to take you, Signor, whom he supposed to be my son, and to educate you as his own child. I at first hesitated, but at length, my wish that you might shine in that sphere to which you were entitled by your noble origin, prevailed, and I at length agreed to let you accompany him, leaving to an all-seeing providence to revenge in his own appointed time your dreadful wrongs, and which moment I trust is now at hand. Happy, indeed, will be the day to Hubert, which sees you put in possession of your rights, and the

duca

duca punished for his foul and horrible deeds.—

" But to conclude my tale—with the liberality of the duca I was enabled to return to my old abode near the Castello de Montoni, where I intended to pass the remainder of my days; but there every thing reminding me of the ever-lamented marchese and marchesa, I soon departed from it, and came to this place, where I have resided ever since.—

" Benedetto, a vassal of the Marchese de Montoni's and his wife, were the only persons to whom I ventured to confide the secret of your being

being in existence, and this I did because I was anxious, should an opportunity ever occur of your being put into possession of your title and estates without endangering yourself, to be able to identify your person beyond doubt; and I also made the mark of a cross on your left leg, which Benedetto and Margueritta witnessed; but it is so many years since I saw or heard from them that I conclude ere this they are numbered with the dead."

Alphonso now recollected the peasant and his wife, who, on his second day's journey from the Castello de Rodolpho to that of Montoni, had protected him from the followers of the

duca: the conversation that he had held with him respecting the Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni and their child, also recurred to him, and he was happy to find that there existed other proofs of his being the rightful heir, besides the asseverations of Hubert and his wife.

The circumstance of their being still in existence, he immediately acquainted Hubert with, and Alphonso determined that they should be sent for without delay to attend at the trial, the day appointed for which was now near its approach, when he meant to make his public claim; and trusted that, with

with the assistance of the superior of the monastery of St. Benedict, to have ample vengeance for the cruel injuries he had sustained from the Duca de Rodolpho.

As soon as his agitated state of mind would permit him, he returned to the Pallazio, and related the foregoing circumstance to the conte, who listened to his recital with evident delight, and taking him by the hand promised him his protection and interest in having his claims made known to the senate.

Being of opinion, that the attendance of Benedetto and Margueritta were necessary, he sent off that same

night a messenger to them, to desire that they would instantly come to Genoa.

It would be difficult to express the joy of Victoria, when she heard this pleasing intelligence: providence she now thought was going to make her ample amends for all her troubles, by placing the man she loved in a situation of life, which would be no longer an obstacle to their union.

Victoria now waited with great anxiety for the trial of the duca, when she hoped that Alphonso would be put into possession of the title and domains of Montoni:—a situation which his virtues, without the adventi-

tious

tious circumstance of birth, she thought fully entitled him to.

The desire which burned in the bosom of Alphonso, to revenge the murder of his parents, and his poignant grief at those dreadful deeds, scarcely left him a moment's time to think of Victoria; but, when sometimes he beheld her lovely form, a gleam of joy would illumine his sad thoughts, and he would anticipate the day when he would be able to avow publicly that ardent passion, which he had so long cherished for her, and which no time or difficulties were able for a moment to weaken; these ruminations would sometimes

serve to stem the torrent of his grief.

But their influence were often insufficient, for his whole soul, wound up in his agonizing thoughts, banished all other ideas save those of the sufferings of his parents: he would then seclude himself from every busy scene, and in the retirement of his chamber, or the most gloomy recesses of the forest, mourn their dreadful fate.

His greatest consolation was in the frequent conversation which he had with Hubert and Jeannetta, and while they were dwelling with delight on the recital of the good deeds

deeds of the Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni, their aged eyes would shew the sorrows of their bosoms, and Alphonso would with them indulge in all the luxury of woe.

CHAP. V.

THE Duca de Rodolpho's haughty and indignant spirit made him ill able to endure his galling chains and gloomy prison.

Not being aware of the extent of the charges against him, he hoped that a trifling apology to the state for his comtemptuous treatment of their commands, joined to his great interest, would procure him a pardon for his offence in carrying away Victoria, whom he determined, when he was at liberty, should, if the ingenuity

genuity of man could effect it, be once more in his power, for he still panted after the possession of that lovely female; and to that longing, was added the desire of being revenged on her for what he had suffered.

Often when the recollection of his being defeated by Alphonso came over his mind, he was like a maniac; starting from his seat he would endeavour to tear off the chains that confined his hands and feet, stamp on the ground, and utter the most dreadful execrations; till faint with his outrageous passions, he would again seat himself, and brood over the horrible acts which he meant to perform, when again at liberty.

Spignoletti, who had learnt the atrocious acts with which he was charged, was overcome by his fears of the dreadful tortures of the rack, and in the terrors he endured at his anticipated sufferings, he entirely forgot his attachment to the duca; and having every reason to suppose that his estates, if not his life, would be the penalty of his sanguinary acts, resolved to endeavour to be allowed to appear as an evidence against him, if by so doing he could save himself.

Such are the weak ties which connect the wicked. Spignoletti, who had hitherto faithfully assisted the duca in his deeds of horror, in consideration of the large rewards, he

from

from time to time received, now, that he thought he would have it no longer in his power to be his friend, resolved to break the evil link that united them, and to aid his enemies in his destruction.

Spignoletti was not slow in making the senate acquainted with his proposals, who, anxious to bring to light the dark deeds of the duca, and fearing that they should fail in discovering them, readily accepted his offers, and, in consideration of his faithfully divulging every circumstance, promised to spare his forfeit life.

The day of trial, so anxiously looked for by Alphonso and his friends, at

length arrived, and the hall of justice was crowded at an early hour, at the further end of which the doge was seated on a superb throne, over which was an awning of crimson velvet, richly fringed with gold, being determined to attend himself, on such an important occasion; below him were seated the judges appointed to examine the accused, and on each side were ranged the senators, richly apparelled.

The hall was lined with the hardy soldiers of the state, who had long fought its battles, and who had so bravely assisted to reduce to subjection the numerous troops of the Duca de Rodolpho.

Attended

Attended by a long train of the monks, the venerable superior of the monastery of St. Benedict now entered the hall, and after him came the Conte Manfred, accompanied by Alphonso, habited in deep sable, which shewed to advantage the symmetry of his person, which, added to his pale countenance, that betrayed the melancholy of his bosom, created an universal admiration and pity, and seemed to speak in the most impressive language to the beholders for redress, for the grievous wrongs he had sustained, while they awaited the appearance of the duca with encreasing indignation.

In obedience to the orders of the doge, one of the judges now order-

ed

ed the prisoner to be conducted to his trial. A folding door was thrown back, and the haughty Rodolpho, with a firm and indignant step, paced the hall till he arrived at the place assigned him.

After him entered Hubert and Jeannetta, with Benedetto and his wife, and when silence was restored, the judge demanded of the duca his name and titles.—

He replied in a firm and haughty tone, "Rodolpho, Duca de Rodolpho, and Marchese de Montoni."

"You are here cited, Duca de Rodolpho," said the judge, "to answer to certain acts of a deep and bloody

bloody nature, supposed to have been performed by you, or at your instigation, and also for your detention of the Signora Victoria, the daughter of Conte Manfred, and your disobedience in not conforming to the orders of the senate."

"Where are my accusers?" proudly returned Rodolpho.

"They will appear forthwith," replied the judge, "but first, answer how you became the Duca de Rodolpho?"

"By the right of lineal succession," he returned," the title came to me on the death of my father,

ther, being his first and only child."

The judge then ordered a secretary to note down his answers, and thus proceeded.

"And how, Duca de Rodolpho, was it, that you became also the Marchese de Montoni?"

"That estate," said the duca, "devolved to me, as the next heir, after the death of the marchese, his wife, and child."

The judge then demanded for what end he had forcibly taken the Signora Victoria, and confined her in his castello; and why, when he was ordered

ordered to restore her, and to answer for his conduct, he had refused to comply with the mandate, and had resisted the forces of the state.

"Because" replied the duca, "Victoria was promised to me for my bride, by her father, the Conte Manfred, and he having chose to sport with my feelings, and to retract his consent when the nuptials were on the eve of taking place, I felt myself ill used, and had recourse to force and stratagem to obtain her."

The judge having read his answers, thus continued:—

"Now, Duca de Rodolpho, thou wilt

wilt hear the long catalogue of crimes, which are supposed to have been perpetrated by you, or at your instigation.—

"Holy father," said he, turning to the superior of the monastery of St. Benedict, "I pray you to produce the confession made to you by the monk Bernardo."

At that name, Rodolpho turned pale, and evidently struggled to conceal his agitation, and to resume his usual look of proud defiance, but for a long time he was unable.

The superior then desired one of the fathers to read to the court the confession of the monk, which, when he

he had done, he likewise read the narrative of the marchesa, found at the Castello de Montoni, by Alphonso. And the packet which Victoria had discovered concealed in the cabinet, which belonged to the unfortunate Duchesa de Rodolpho, while she was confined in the apartment in the eastern tower.

When he had concluded, the judge, fixing his inquiring eyes on the duca, demanded what he had to allege against the truth of what Bernardo had confessed on his death-bed, and which indeed was evidently, in part, corroborated by the papers that had fortunately been found.

" Produce the proof!" exclaimed Rodolpho—

Rodolpho—"The whole is a concerted scheme, the weak machinations of my enemies.—I disavow the deeds, and pronounce the person who has thus dared to call in question the right of my inheriting the estates of Rodolpho and Montoni, a base fabricator!"

"Beware, duca," said the judge, "how you cast such an implication on the holy father.—Let the evidences attend, from them we may learn more."

Spignoletti was now conducted into the hall, and ordered by the judge to relate what he knew of the guilty deeds of the duca.

When Rodolpho found that he who knew

knew all his dark transactions was going to appear as an evidence against him, and to unfold them to the world, his countenance became deadly pale, and his agitation appeared more than he could support.

The judges marked the various changes of his features, as Spignoletti, commencing at the murder of the old Duca de Rodolpho, gave a clear detail of every transaction relative to that deed, and also the different assassinations of the duchesa, the Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni, and the destruction of the infant Ferdinando, as was at that time believed to be the case.

A groan of horror was universally uttered

uttered by the numerous assembly, the brow of the doge was contracted, expressions of their enraged sensations were heard from every one, and it was sometime ere silence was restored in the hall.

Alphonso, who had hitherto been only a spectator, now advanced to the foot of the throne on which the doge was seated, and with a modest and dignified demeanor thus addressed him:—

"The intents of the Duca de Rodolpho in exterminating every claimant to the domains of Montoni were not entirely successful, for in me behold that Ferdinando, the child of the Marchese and Marchesa de Montoni, who was

was supposed to be destroyed, but preserved in a manner truly miraculous by a wonder working providence."

The doge listened to him with attention, and desired him to produce the proofs, if he had any, of what he had alleged.

The duca appeared lost in astonishment, which kept him silent, while he listened to the examinations of Hubert and Jeannetta, and also of Benedetto and his wife; and when they were concluded, the doge thus addressed the prisoner.

"The hand of a divine providence appears at length to have brought forth

forth the dark and bloody deeds of thee, Duca de Rodolpho.—Heaven has permitted thee for a while to triumph in thy horrible villainies; but justice, though long delayed, is never totally withheld, but falls at length with tenfold weight on the guilty—punishing them for the injuries and oppressions of the unfortunate, who have suffered beneath their lawless power.—

"Thou, Rodolpho, who never felt mercy for others, shall not have any shewn to thee; the innocent blood which thou hast shed calls loudly for retribution. Duca, thy hours are numbered, and, when to-morrow's sun has proceeded half his diurnal course, the hand of the executioner

tioner shall cut short the thread of thy guilty existence; and may heaven grant that thy ignominious death be some atonement for thy crimes, and lessen thy punishments hereafter.—

"As for thee, Spignoletti, the cruel perpetrator of thy lord's horrible designs, in consequence of our promises, and thy confession, we spare thy forfeit life; but this is our fixed decree, that after thou hast witnessed the painful exit of thy master, a monastery shall receive thee, where, by long and strict penance, thou mayest make some expiation for thy atrocious deeds; and may heaven grant thee a long life, to afford thee an opportunity of rending up thy soul in

 a state

a state acceptable to the supreme disposer of the universe."

When the doge had pronounced the sentence of the Duca de Rodolpho, he who but lately was exalted so high in the world, in the possession of so much power and authority, which instead of exerting in acts of virtue, he had used in the practice of cruelty, oppression, and violence, now beheld himself a prisoner, without a friend, looked on with scorn and horror by all aronnd, weighed down by the dreadful burthen of a guilty conscience, and doomed to expiate his crimes by an ignominious death. A change so sudden, so dreadful, overcome him, he felt himself

covered

covered with shame and infamy, and without daring to look up, with difficulty was led from the hall, in order to be conducted to his prison, for so great were his internal agonies as almost to deny his limbs their natural functions.

Spignoletti was also taken to his place of confinement, where he was to remain till conducted to some monastery, whose strict rules and rigorous penances would to him perhaps be a punishment far greater than death.

The doge now turned to Alphonso.

"Receive," said he, "thy just rights, of which thou hast been so

long deprived of; for satisfied with the evidence which have appeared before us, that thou art the son of the Marchese de Montoni, we grant to thee not only that domain, but also the territories of the condemned duca, with his rank, creating thee from henceforth Duca de Rodolpho and Marchese de Montoni."

Bursts of applause were now heard from the pleased assembly; and Alphonso, whom for the future we shall call Ferdinando, bowing with respect and gratitude to the doge, retired from the hall with the Conte Manfred, and the venerable superior of the monastery of St. Benedict, who with unfeigned delight congratulated him on the events of the day.

Victoria

Victoria heard the acquisitions of Alphonso, with a mixture of delight and apprehension, for she feared, that now possessed of so elevated a rank, and such extensive possessions, he might perhaps no longer remember that he once vowed to love her while he existed.

Meanwhile, Rodolpho, in his prison, lost to hope, anticipating the pangs of dissolution, and tortured by his conscience, exhibited a melancholy proof of the horrors of guilt: such a downfall, he was indeed little prepared for; but, instead of prayers and acts, which would have proved him not entirely lost to every sense of religion, he one while raved in all the wild delirium of a maniac, and

uttered curses deep and horrible on Alphonso, Victoria, Manfred, and every one he knew; then he would relapse into despair, and striking his forehead with his clenched hand, think on the coming morn, when he would be numbered with the dead.

Thus passed the hours of night, and, now the roseate tints of dawn entered the grating of his dungeon; to him they were as a warning voice, telling him of his approaching dissolution; he cursed himself, cursed the light of heaven, and called on the ministers of darkness to shield him from his just doom.

The bell now tolled: Rodolpho

heard

heard the shouts of the multitude, who were waiting without the prison, eager to behold his last sufferings, and he now exerted all his resolution, determined not to afford his enemies the satisfaction of seeing that he shrunk from death.

His heart beat violently with his horrific sensations, when he heard the paces of the guards in the passage that led to his prison, but his emotions were not visible in his countenance, he frowned on them as they entered, and while they were taking off his chains, held a contemptuous silence; that done, he left his prison with his arms folded and his head erected. The soldiers were astonished at his demeanor, which was the same

as when he proudly paced the halls of his castello—but how different were his senations.

The scaffold on which he was to suffer was erected in the grand square: innumerable were the people who thronged to see a man so dreadfully notorious for his crimes.

Rodolpho still preserved his haughty demeanor, and as he was conducted through the ranks of the armed troops, cast his indignant looks around him, and sneered with the greatest contempt at the curses which were uttered against him from every part.

Spignoletti, with down cast looks, followed

followed him; he seemed indeed to be fearful lest his sentence should be revoked, and he should be condemned to the death he so justly deserved.

It was with the greatest difficulty the troops could prevent the people from striking or throwing stones at the duca and his associate, as they passed, so great was their indignation exited by their horrible crimes.

Rodolpho, undaunted by the behaviour of the crowd, arrived at length at the grand square, which was so entirely filled with the populace, that the troops could with difficulty make their way through the nearly impenetrable mass, which every mo-

ment encreased; and, although every one was impatient to see the murderous monster suffer, yet the crowd presented so great an obstruction, that the people growing furious at the delay, and no longer able to endure the savage looks and frowns of Rodolpho, rushed on him and Spignoletti, and in spite of the swords of the troops, who wounded several in their endeavours to preserve them alive, they tore them to pieces in their bloody fury, and with savage joy cast their limbs in the air, while they were yet quivering with life.

Thus ended the blood-stained existence of the haughty Duca de Rodolpho, and the barbarons Spignoletti,

noletti, affording an awful lesson to those who in defiance of all laws, human and divine, urged by ambitious or worse motives, commit such foul and horrible deeds.

The pen delights not to dwell on such relations, so dreadful so blood-stained, and only traces them in the hope that the fate of the guilty will be a warning to all, who peruse its weak efforts, never to do any act contrary to the dictates of conscience.

After the people had so dreadfully satiated their revenge they quietly dispersed, and left the mangled remains in the square, which were interred by the executioner in one

grave, and a tablet placed over them, descriptive of their end, which is yet to be seen.

Alphonso could not pity the duca, though his sufferings must have been great; for, to his mental view, constantly appeared his unfortunate mother in her dying agonies; but recollecting that he had now many duties to perform, he signified his resolution of proceeding immediately to the Castello de Montoni; and preparations were made for his departure.

Alphonso took a tender leave of Victoria and the contessa:—With Conte Manfred he was a long time engaged in earnest converse: the good

good conte would willingly have accompanied him, but Alphonso would on no account allow him, well knowing that his fatigues and anxieties of late had been much more than his years could support. He promised the conte to be as expeditious in his return as was possible, and taking a friendly leave of him, departed from Genoa.

Victoria, confident that his now elevated station in life had not changed his sentiments, for from his last interview with her his deportment was as tender as ever, and he deeply sighed when he pressed her hand at parting, she anticipated his return, when the obstacle to their union being so wonderfully removed, and he was placed in a

situation,

situation, as to birth, fortune, and rank, inferior only to the doge himself. She had no fears that her parents would hesitate to consent to her being united to him, whom, even if he had not been so nobly born, or possessed of so much wealth, she thought from motives of gratitude they ought to have given their assent to her being made happy with the only man she could ever love.

CHAP. VI.

FERDINANDO now, with filial piety, attended by Hubert and some domestics, hastened to pay the last sad tribute of his love to the remains of his parents.

On his arrrival at the Castello de Montoni, he was joyfully received as their rightful lord, by the numerous vassals who had been previously informed of his coming. He was pleased with their honest zeal to assure him of their respect, and promised when he resided on the estate in him they should find a kind master.

The

The gates of the castello were once more opened, and Ferdinando with many tears, visited the cavity beneath the trap-door, where the ruthless Rodolpho had ordered the murdered bodies of his parents to be secreted.

He had them quickly removed, and ordered preparations to be instantly made for their interment.

On the evening of the third day Ferdinando attended them to the grave, which was made in the chapel of the castello.

Many were the tears that were shed over them by all around, who well recollected their virtues; Ferdinando for a while indulged in his sorrows to an

an excess that greatly affected every one, but, when at length the earth covered their coffins, Hubert gently drew him from the chapel.

From that day he gradually recovered his melancholy, and as he intended to make the castello his future residence, he gave directions for it to be put into complete repair.

Every thing being now done which required his presence, he repaired to the Castello de Rodolpho, and mindful of the solemn injunction of the spectral form which he had seen on that eventful night when he rescued Victoria from the duca, he immediately had the skeleton, which he had discovered in the secret passage, and

and which from the confession of the monk Bernardo, he supposed must be that of the old Duca de Rodolpho, interred with all the honours his rank required, as also the remains of the unfortunate duchesa; the venerable Father Oswald performing the solemn rites of the church, for Ferdinando had on his arrival instantly sent to the monastery, where he resided, for the esteemed director of his youth, whose pleasure was great, when he learnt the late events, for which he blessed the Almighty providence, who had directed him to make the discovery.

Father Oswald was immediately placed in his former situation as confessor to the castel lo, of which he had

for

for some time been deprived by the duca.

Having thus performed his duty as a son and a friend, the lovely form of Victoria alone occupied his thoughts; now blessed with honours, riches and powers, he could publicly offer his hand and heart to that beauteous maid.

Eager to see her after so long an absence, he gave orders for his immediate return to Genoa, and had nearly reached St. Remo, when a carriage passing him, to his great delight he saw seated in it Don Roderigo de Gonzales and his faithful Leonora.

Both

Both of them immediately recognized him, and they stopped the carriage to speak to so dear a friend.—It would be difficult to describe the pleasure afforded to each by this meeting. Leonora beheld in Ferdinando, the generous preserver of her life and honour: Don Roderigo viewed him with the greatest gratitude, as such, and Ferdinando was indebted to Gonzales for his existence.

When their mutual joy and expressions of delight, at so unexpected a meeting permitted them to speak on other subjects, Gonzales informed Ferdinando, that having found his adorned Leonora at the convent to which he had attended her, they immediately set off for Alicants, in

in order to claim their estates; which they had some reason to fear, owing to they long continued absence had fallen to the next heir; but to his great delight found that his sister, whom he had long lamented as dead was still living, as she had escaped the devouring flames which destroyed his residence, by leaping from the balcony.

His estates, therefore, continued in her possession, and his fears on that account being done away, he determined to seek a just revenge of the cruel Gomez; for which purpose he procured a sufficient number of the condottieri, and choosing a dark night for his attack, he silently advanced at

at the head of his party to the ruined building.

Being acquainted with the situation of the trap-door, and the grating in the court-yard, by his Leonora, he determined to attempt an entrance at both of those places.

When he came to the grating, he found that it had not been fastened since the escape of his wife, and he descended into the place below, followed by half his party, who having lighted their torches, forced open the door and began to traverse the passages which led to the residence of the banditti.

The

The other part met with more obstacles, for when they had found out the trap-door it was so securely fastened below, that for a long time it resisted their utmost efforts; and the noise they made in their endeavours to force it open, alarming the banditti they armed themselves, and rushing out at another opening, attacked the party.

"Our situation," continued Gonzales, "was now become dangerous: it was necessary for us immediately to emerge from the caverns below, to assist those who by reason of the smallness of their numbers must be hard pressed: fortunately in doing this we were unobserved, or might have become an easy prey to the savage

Gomez:

Gomez: we now attacked them in the rear, when the banditti finding the number of their enemies thus unexpectedly encreased, suddenly gave way and fled.

"We took a great many of them prisoners, and the next morning on searching among the dead the breathless body of Gomez was discovered; still, even in death, his countenance retained that ferocious look which distinguished it when alive.

"Thus ended his ill-spent life, he was thrown with the rest of the bodies into the cave, which was their habitation when alive, and those who were taken were condemned to the gallies for life."

Gonzales here concluded his account of his transactions since he had parted with Ferdinando, who in return related to them the singular adventures which had befallen him, and the happy termination of them.

His account greatly interested them, and the pious Gonzales exclaimed—

"The hand of a just and beneficent creator is plainly to be traced in every part of your life.—May the atrocious deeds of Rodolpho, and his savage agent, be atoned for in their wretched end.—Although the sword of retribution ever hangs over the guilty head, ready to punish him for his

his crimes, yet its fall is oft times delayed by the forbearing hand of the divinity, in hopes that the sinner will repent:—while as a recompense for the painful trials of suffering virtue, providence never fails to restore them at length to every happiness that this world can afford, or the human mind can wish for; as a prelude to endless joys in the regions of celestial bliss.—May you, Ferdinando, reap the just reward of the virtuous actions of your life—may you be the happy possessor of your beloved Victoria!—The fervent and grateful prayers of Gonzales and his Leonora shall daily be offered up to Heaven for the accomplishment of your wishes."

The

The friends now took an affectionate leave of each other, Gonzales and Leonora promising on their return from Venice, where they were then going, that they would pass some time with him at the Castello de Montoni.

Ferdinando now proceeded to Genoa, where he was received by the good Conte Manfred and the contessa, with every mark of gratitude and friendship; Victoria too, in faltering accents, welcomed her deliverer. Her health was now re-established, and, whether it was the rich glow of the setting sun, which beaming through the casements shone full on that lovely maid, or that she was really become more beautiful, Ferdinando

at that moment was unable to tell; but her charms had so greatly attracted his notice, that for some moments, in the most exquisite emotions of rapture, he gazed on her interesting features, while his encreasing admiration prevented the faculties of speech.

At length he endeavoured to recollect himself, and seeing the blushing confusion of the lovely maid, he hastily articulated some almost unintelligible sentences, and after he had remained a short time in the apartment, he quitted it to muse in the retirement of his own, on his adored Victoria; and bewildered in a maze of fears lest it should not be his happy lot to possess such transcendant

ant

ant charms, he long continued there, endeavouring to tranquillize the agitations he endured.

Conte Manfred could not mistake the cause of Ferdinando's confusion at his meeting with Victoria, and for the first time, became acquainted with his affection for her. Before the present period, had such an idea occurred he would have hastily endeavoured to obliterate it from his mind; not but that he always revered the virtues of Ferdinando, and even sometimes sighed to think that it was not in his power to reward him as he deserved with the hand of Victoria, whom he had so often saved from destruction, on account of the obscurity of his origin. But now, when

he saw him covered with honours, and superior in rank and fortune to himself, and as there was every reason to suppose not indifferent to Victoria, the pleasing idea of seeing her happy in the possession of so much worth, gave him the greatest delight.

He communicated his sentiments to the contessa, who, as well as himself, foresaw the certain happiness that would await her daughter in such an union, which she long had earnestly wished might take place.

The lovely Victoria's gentle breast had long acknowledged Ferdinando for its sovereign: love by slow degrees had seized on her yielding heart, and entwined

entwined its golden fetters around it, which, enveloped in the pleasing bands, resigned itself to the delightful bondage, without a wish for a release.

Ferdinando impatiently waited for an opportunity of obtaining a private interview with Victoria, when he might again disclose his love and encreasing adoration for her; nor was he long without the so much desired meeting, as he knew it was her constant custom to walk in the cool of the evening in the gardens belonging to the Pallazio, where he first dared to disclose his love; and with sensations of delight he beheld her on the third evening after his arrival, direct-

ing her steps to the well known grotto.

With encreasing agitation he followed her; he observed with admiration her elegant form, her lovely ringlets waving in the breeze; exercise had given a deeper vermilion tint to her cheek; and to his enamoured gaze she appeared something more than mortal. As he approached her, observing that she was intently viewing some distant object, while a gentle sigh was breathed from her roseate lips—

"Lovely Victoria," said he, "what has the happiness of engaging your attention?"

" I was viewing," returned Victoria, " yonder bark, as it swiftly seemed to skim along the surface of the gulph, and my heart feels for the hapless state of the poor fishermen, who are obliged to encounter continual dangers to earn a scanty subsistence."

" And is the interest which Victoria takes for her fellow creatures," returned Alphonso, " confined to those objects of commiseration, who, inured to toil and dangers from their infancy, are perhaps happier amid their laborious employ than the rich in their sumptuous abodes. Will she not be interested by the situation of a fond lover, who comes to implore her to relieve him from the torturing

state of uncertainty which robs him of repose; yes, beloved, adored Victoria, 'tis from you alone I can expect happiness; behold me at your feet, most lovely of your sex—let my sighs move you to pity, or else I shall fall a victim to the power of your resistless charms.—Say then, adored Victoria, that the presumptuous Ferdinando is not despised, and that you do not forbid his hopes of one day calling you his own:—deign, oh much loved object of my soul's adoration, to answer me; and by so doing make me either the most wretched or the happiest of men?"

Victoria was somewhat disconcerted by this unexpected declaration and request of Ferdinando; she found, however,

however, that she had no alternative but to make such a reply as the feelings of her heart should dictate. Ferdinando had deprived her of the possibility of escape, for he had sunk on his knees before her, and held her hand in his agitated grasp, while he gazed on her in breathless expectation of her answer.

Her deep mantling blushes, more eloquent than language, exposed the situation of her heart in their glowing confession, while she was endeavouring to summon resolution to reply.

"Ferdinando can never be an object of indifference to the heart of Victoria," said the lovely maid, "when she recollects the many generous

generous acts which he performed in rescuing her from destruction, nor will she, if sanctioned by the approbation of her beloved parents, refuse her hand and heart to him who has so well deserved it."

Ferdinando, with the ecstatic delight of an accepted lover, pressed the hand he held to his lips, as he still remained kneeling before her, when the voice of the conte made him suddenly start up.

Manfred had from a distant part of the garden witnessed the meeting between his daughter and Ferdinando, and anxious to know how she would receive his addresses, he unperceived entered the grotto where they were, and with delight in his countenance,

after he had heard the answer of Victoria, he took her hand and that of Ferdinando, while he thus addressed them—

"Thy parents, my beloved Victoria, thus sanction your union with the worthy preserver of your life and honour: receive from a father, Ferdinando, this inestimable gift which you so well deserve."

Words cannot describe the happiness of Ferdinando—in the rapture of the moment he imprinted on the lips of the lovely blushing Victoria a burning kiss of love, and embraced his future father with ecstatic sensations of gratitude for so precious a gift.

The

The happy pair now returned to the pallazio, when the contessa was made acquainted with the pleasing events of the evening, and after much persuasion Ferdinando at length received the blushing consent of Victoria to become his bride at the expiration of that month.

It being determined that the marriage should be performed at Montoni, pursuant to the wish of Manfred, Ferdinando immediately dispatched a messenger to Oswald, at the Castello de Rodolpho, to entreat he would repair as soon as possible to Montoni, in order to unite him to Victoria, to which the kind instructor of his youth, well pleased, consented.

Conte

Conte Manfred, with the contessa and Victoria, now began their journey to the residence of Ferdinando, who soon after their arrival received his lovely bride from the hands of her happy parents.

On that morn the lofty halls of the Castello de Montoni re-echoed the frequent peals of joy from the happy tenantry and vassals, who vied with each other in expressing their delight at a union which promised to be so productive of happiness to the son of their lamented lord.

Manfred and his amiable contessa, having remained some time at Montoni, returned to Genoa, where Ferdinando

dinando and his Victoria promised soon to see them.

Hubert and Jeannetta were assigned apartments in the castello, where they long lived, enjoying that comfort which they had so greatly deserved for their humanity to the helpless intended victim of Rodolpho's avarice.

Benedetto and Margueretta were not forgotten, they were allowed an income sufficient to make them independent, and to provide for their children, who, as soon as they were able, were taken into the service of Ferdinando.

Victoria

Victoria presented her adored husband with a lovely offspring, who transmitted to posterity the virtues of their parents, who had given, during their unexampled sufferings, which they had endured, so many proof of their reliance on the goodness of the Almighty.

The virtues of the illustrious Duca and Duchesa de Montoni continued to shine unrivalled, and their happiness promised a lasting maturity: all was peace and joy around them. The halls resounded with songs of mirth and happiness from the numerous vassals, and the lofty chapel re-echoed the swelling notes of the tuneful choir, raised in exalted

praises

praises of him, who is at once the guardian of the virtuous and avenger of the oppressed.

THE END.

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